United Nations S/PV.8156

Security Council

Seventy-third year

(Provisional)

8156th meeting

Thursday, 11 January 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/1104)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-00851 (E)

Accessible document

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/1104)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/1104, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas: It is my honour to be here in the Council today to introduce the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/1104).

Despite continuous progress in West Africa and the Sahel, notably regarding democratic and peaceful political transitions, the security situation in the region remains a matter of grave concern. In Mali, terrorists launched a complex attack on bases of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Kidal, resulting in the death of one peacekeeper. Three more Malian soldiers were killed recently by a landmine in Mopti region, and another Malian soldier was killed by terrorists in Niono. Two separate attacks on security posts were also registered in Burkina Faso near the Malian border. The attacks in Mali as well as within the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso tri-border area are mainly attributed to Al-Qaida-affiliated groups and the Islamic State in Greater Sahara.

In the Niger, the increasing number of security incidents has compelled the Government to dedicate 17 per cent of public expenditure in 2018 to the security sector, compared with 15 per cent in 2017. This has, however, triggered demonstrations in the capital of the Niger given the expected detrimental effects on the delivery of social services.

Following a notable decline in the number of Boko Haram attacks in the first half of the year, there has been an uptick in the number of incidents since September last year, with a peak of 143 civilian casualties alone in November 2017. The use of children as suicide bombers by Boko Haram increased five-fold compared with 2016, to reach 135 cases in 2017. While 700 people abducted by Boko Haram have recently escaped captivity, the group continues to kidnap innocent persons, as shown by the recent disappearance of 31 loggers in Gamboru near the Cameroon border. Overall, more than 2 million displaced persons are still desperately waiting for an end to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin.

The comprehensive response of the region to address the Boko Haram threat must be supported by the international community. I commend the successful efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and welcome the conference on the resuscitation of Lake Chad to be hosted by Nigeria next month.

In the Sahel, the Group of Five (G-5 Sahel) has made significant progress in the operationalization of its Joint Force, including by establishing its military command structure and a Force headquarters in Sevaré, and conducting its first military operation with French troops in late October 2017. In line with resolution 2391 (2017), consultations are currently ongoing regarding the conclusion of a technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel States on the provision of operational and logistical support to the Joint Force through MINUSMA.

On 8 December, at a meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union and representatives of the G-5 Sahel in Brussels, I underscored that the security response needs to be complemented by measures to tackle governance challenges as well as to boost economic development and the resilience of the Sahelian population, as articulated in the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

The past six months have seen substantive progress in the efforts to reinvigorate the strategy, notably through an extensive mapping of strategy-related activities and the presentation of a proposal in that context to strengthen the resilience of the Sahel population during the third annual Climate Finance

Day, to be held on 11 December in Paris. A support plan for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will now be shared with national, regional and international partners so as to harmonize approaches and to canvass for effective support for the Sahel in line with national and regional priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Meanwhile, the exponential spread of intercommunal and farmer-herder conflicts, which have claimed hundreds of lives in the recent past, must also be cause for worry. It is a ticking time-bomb that unattended could escalate beyond the community level.

Last December, during the Policy Committee of the West Africa Coast Initiative, member countries committed to reinforcing the fight against organized crime in line with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional action plan to address illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and drug abuse. Also, migration has become one of the most lucrative activities for criminal networks across West Africa and the Sahel. In this regard, stemming human trafficking must continue to be a top priority in 2018, as recently underscored by Secretary-General Guterres.

In line with resolution 2282 (2016), the United Nations continues to pioneer the sustaining peace approach in the Gambia and Burkina Faso to ensure lasting peace and the consolidation of these young democracies. Strong support by the international community for Burkina Faso's emergency plan will enable it to withstand threats to its peace and security. The Gambia has just concluded the first phase of its security-sector reform, and democratic consolidation is progressing with generous financial support on the part of international partners. However, more attention still needs to be paid to the challenges facing the two countries in the areas of security-sector reform, national reconciliation and the justice sector. The United Nations continues to coordinate closely with the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and other partners in this regard.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law is a fundamental basis for advancing peace, security and development. Thus I particularly welcome Burkina Faso's new law on human rights defenders and the law recently passed by the Gambia's National Assembly to establish a national human rights commission. The establishment of a judicial commission in Nigeria to review the armed forces' compliance with international human rights standards and the start of judicial proceedings against Boko Haram suspects in Nigeria also need to be commended.

Regarding the demarcation of the Cameroon-Nigeria border, the good-neighbourly relationship between the two countries continues to increase prospects for its completion.

The trajectory of successful democratic elections in West Africa continues. Notably, on 10 October and 26 December the people of Liberia came out in large numbers to peacefully elect a new President. I applaud the Liberian people and their leaders for their recourse to exclusively legal means to settle all electorally related disputes; this has served to further strengthen its existing democratic institutions. The deployment of former President Obasanjo of Nigeria, whom I accompanied in his capacity as a member of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, following the 26 December presidential run-off, contributed to the gracious concession statement by Vice-President Boakai and the magnanimous gesture of President-elect George Weah, and demonstrated once more the efficacy of preventive diplomacy.

Further attention now needs to be paid to the forthcoming elections in Sierra Leone and Guinea. In Togo, opposition parties continue with their protests. The lack of consensus on the implementation of constitutional reforms in the country could threaten the holding of the legislative and local elections scheduled to be held this year. I continue my close collaboration with President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana and President Alpha Condé of Guinea, Chairperson of the African Union, to facilitate a resolution of the impasse between the Government and the opposition, in consonance with the Togolese Constitution, regional democratic best practices and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

As we pay tribute to the outgoing President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is leaving office after 12 years of leadership and service to her country and the wider region, in particular during her term as the Chair of the Economic Community of West African States, we must increase our efforts to promote the participation of women in decision-making and leadership and ensure that the region's youth are solidly placed at the centre of development policies.

Let me finally underscore that UNOWAS remains strongly committed to continuing to support efforts for the consolidation of peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel in line with its mandate and very much appreciates the constant support it enjoys from the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire notes with great interest the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1104), His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and reiterates its support for his tireless efforts to promote sustainable peace and security throughout the world in general, and in West Africa and the Sahel in particular.

My country commends his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, on his outstanding briefing, which apprised the Security Council of the progress made since the report of the Secretary-General was published in June 2017. He also cited the many ongoing humanitarian and security challenges that continue to weaken the building blocks of peace and security in a region already sorely tested by several socioeconomic issues. The gains made in the area of political governance spark hope, because they are part and parcel of an irreversible process of deep-seated change under way in our society. The Council must continue to support efforts at dialogue and peaceful dispute resolution in some States of the region.

In spite of the overall progress made in West Africa, my country remains concerned about the ongoing threats to terrorism and violent extremism in the region, which are linked to transnational organized crime and trafficking of all kinds, in particular trafficking in migrants, illegal drugs, weapons and persons. The phenomenon is exacerbated by poverty and unemployment, in particular among young people in areas where it is difficult for the State to exercise its authority. The quest for sustainable solutions to such challenges leaves us no other option but to work together to adopt a holistic, coordinated approach that would enable is to reduce threats to peace and security. To that end, the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire believes that action must be taken at three levels.

First, action must be taken at the political and strategic level to ensure greater consistency among mechanisms in order to strengthen security, political governance and democracy in the West Africa and the Sahel. In that regard, we think it essential to fully exploit the comparative advantages of regional organizations, in particular the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose successive interventions in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Burkina Faso and The Gambia have demonstrated the full extent of their capabilities in the areas of conflict prevention and conflict management in the countries concerned. Following the recent holding of peaceful presidential elections and the subsequent democratic transfer of power in Liberia, one of Côte d'Ivoire's neighbours, we are hopeful that the country has turned away from political and military crises, turned over a new leaf and is now writing a new story that is full of hope. It would enable this brotherly country to continue to build peace and remain on the path of socioeconomic development.

In that regard, we would like to congratulate Liberia's political actors and its people on setting a good example in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular. Now more than ever, it is up to the international community, in the light of the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, which is scheduled for March, to continue to support the efforts of the Liberian Government and the country's civil society organizations with a view to building on the gains of the State's transition to democracy and bringing about sustainable peace and reconciliation that is indispensable to the country's socioeconomic development.

The implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel through an innovative multisectoral approach, and greater consistency among regional initiatives is also vital and should do more to strengthen security and enhance the resilience of States and people of the region to crises. However, it must be underscored that if the Strategy is to succeed, all partners, including countries of the region and international donors, must honour their commitments.

Secondly, at the operational level, it is important to continue efforts aimed at forging synergies between the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force in their efforts to combat organized terrorist groups

that are now equipped with increasingly powerful and sophisticated tools. In that regard, I welcome the adoption on 8 December 2017 of resolution 2391 (2017), which outlines MINUSMA's logistical and operational support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in an effort to enhance its logistical and operational capabilities, as an essential factor in achieving that objective.

By the same token, and in line with the recommendations of the fifty-second ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS, held in Abuja on 15 December 2017, Côte d'Ivoire calls for the implementation of predictable and sustainable funding mechanisms for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It hopes that the commitments made during the donor conferences in Berlin and Paris are honoured so as to raise the funding required to ensure that the force becomes operational in March.

My country also welcomes efforts made by countries participating in the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have curbed the operations and geographical spread of Boko Haram. However, the information we have regarding the withdrawal of a major country's contingent is a source of concern.

Thirdly, we need to envision a more inclusive socioeconomic development of the countries in West Africa and the Sahel, especially in rural areas where poverty-stricken and unemployed youth are easy recruitment prey for combatants. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the launch of the Alliance for the Sahel, which aims to bring together all the initiatives promoting development in the Sahel region.

To conclude, I recall that there must be synergy in the actions taken by the countries and regional institutions of West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations with a view to ensuring lasting peace and inclusive development. Such synergy will help us to address the root causes of conflict in the region. In any case, my delegation remains convinced that despite the regional context, which seems to be particularly difficult, UNOWAS continues to be an important tool for conflict prevention in West Africa and the Sahel. In that regard and in full cooperation with the other members of the Security Council, Côte d'Ivoire will lend its full support to UNOWAS for the achievement of the common goals shared by the Council, namely, the maintenance of peace and security and promoting development in West Africa and the Sahel.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Chambas, for his briefing today and recognize and acknowledge the very important work he does, of which today he listed the very important positive developments in the region. I know and I would like to pay tribute to the fact that his discreet, delicate hand has played a part in supporting many of those developments. So, I thank him again for that.

The United Nations regional offices have an important role to play in delivering on the ambition of the Secretary-General, and supported by the Council, to put prevention at the heart of our work. As we have heard, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) continues to carry out a number of important preventive functions, in particular though the use of its good offices. UNOWAS plays a critical role by contributing to the strategic and integrated analysis of the opportunities, risks and challenges faced by national and local authorities in their efforts to sustain peace. I think Mr. Chambas has presented many of those today. I would like to say that we strongly support that work and would like to see it replicated in other regions.

A conflict prevented rarely makes the front pages, and success stories often go unnoticed. However, while political tensions continue in some countries of West Africa and the Sahel, it is important that we acknowledge positive developments and reforms in the region, such as in Liberia, The Gambia and Burkina Faso, as we have heard today. The Council and the United Nations should seize opportunities to support the region in consolidating democratic practices and sustaining inclusive economic development and growth. UNOWAS also has an important role to play in that regard.

I would like to take just one minute to mention Liberia again, as my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire did. I think it is very important that we commend the country for the peaceful, transparent, free and fair election process that has just been concluded. We acknowledge the important supportive role played by the region and the United Nations, including by former President Obasanjo of Nigeria and again Special Representative Chambas. We look forward to continuing our support to Liberia as it moves to a new chapter of its development, including through the Peacebuilding Commission.

As we ask UNOWAS to do more — including in support of the transitions from peacekeeping missions to non-mission settings in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire and in support of regional efforts to combat terrorism, and so on — we must also ensure that adequate resources are available to it to carry out those tasks.

Many of the challenges facing the countries of the region — terrorism, transnational crime, humanitarian crises, increasing competition for scarce resources, including as a result of climate change — show no respect for national borders. Only sustained and holistic approaches that take into account the root causes of conflict and instability in the region, and the linkages between them can lead to long-term solutions. The ongoing cooperation between UNOWAS and other regional organizations provides the potential for the development of such approaches. The decision taken at the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Summit in December that ECOWAS and UNOWAS would work together on the role of changing transhumance patterns as they relate to a potential conflict between herders and farmers and conflict dynamics across the region is a good example of such cooperation.

In conclusion, I once again want to thank the Special Representative for his briefing today and assure him of our continued very strong support.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation appreciates the convening of this meeting and the briefing delivered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Chambas, on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. Peru especially welcomes the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) as a sui generis tool for effective action, especially in relation to prevention. Its regional and holistic vision gives it a special ability to take action, together with its flexibility and adaptability to the various challenges of the current subregional scene.

At the same time, the Office is the appropriate platform for coordinating regional and subregional efforts and alliances that address the existing complex cross-border threats to peace and security in the area, while promoting both the full exercise of human rights and a gender perspective in the prevention and peace consolidation processes. Given the Office's fundamental role recognized by various international actors, we would like to underscore three successful areas for action that reveal its important potential.

First, in the area of preventive diplomacy, Peru believes that UNOWAS stands out particularly in its capacity to be an active agent of conflict prevention. Its monitoring and early warning functions have helped to ease tensions and offer peaceful political solutions in various States. Of special note is the development of mediation and good offices, which have prevented the emergence and aggravation of political crises. Those capacities must be strengthened and enhanced.

Secondly, in the area of promoting development and institutional strengthening, it is precisely the ability of UNOWAS to see the big picture that has allowed it to do outstanding work in coordinating with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and various regional organizations in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, for example.

Peru believes that such a multidimensional approach can contribute to the achievement of the common objectives of creating inclusive governance in the region and establishing programmes aimed at promoting development. One commitment of UNOWAS that we deem relevant is the strengthening of political institutions to make them more efficient and transparent. Similarly, the recent agreement between UNOWAS and the United Nations Office for Central Africa to work together and increase cooperation and assistance in the Lake Chad basin is noteworthy. It is a shared vision that is vital and of the utmost urgency that seeks to respond to the difficult living conditions in the region.

Thirdly, in the area of fighting against terrorism and violent extremism, in the aforementioned articulating framework with various African organizations, UNOWAS has demonstrated efficiency in contributing to a cross-cutting approach to address the serious threat posed by the actions of Boko Haram. Peru would like to highlight the reintegration programmes that have been developed with people associated with that terrorist group, as well as actions aimed at supporting the fight against impunity by strengthening the judicial institutions responsible for prosecuting the group's members. The contribution that UNOWAS is able to make to addressing transnational organized crime, which in many cases provides financial support

for such terrorist activities, will also be important to those efforts.

In conclusion, we recognize the advantages of having this Office in the subregion, but we also emphasize the importance of ensuring that it can rely on resources that are adequate to ensuring its ability to continue its important work. We also welcome complementary initiatives, such as the Alliance for the Sahel, launched in July 2017 and led by the European Union, with the participation of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his briefing. We appreciate his performance and the efforts he makes on a daily basis.

The work of special political missions is an important tool for developing strategies for building and sustaining peace. In the case of UNOWAS, the work it is doing pursuant to its mandate and, of course, in the areas of preventive diplomacy, good governance, the protection of human rights, good offices, political mediation and facilitation of dialogue is vital, and we want to highlight and support its efforts to promote the active participation of women in political processes related to peace and security.

We would also like to highlight the mission's excellent coordination with regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, which enables it to encourage the leadership of the countries of West Africa and the Sahel to work for political, institutional and security-sector reform. In that regard, we would like to single out the extraordinary electoral process held in Liberia towards the end of last year in a peaceful, credible and stable environment, and to congratulate the Liberian people on demonstrating their commitment to democracy through such a significant event. We stress this case because it shows how fundamental it is to have reconciliation processes based on inclusive political dialogue, consensus and rapprochement among the parties, which promote the strengthening of lasting and sustainable peace.

We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We believe firmly that the contribution and commitment of the countries of the Sahel, regional and subregional organizations and the cooperating countries will be critical to that implementation, with a view to achieving long-term results that will enable us to meet security challenges, strengthen political and socioeconomic stability and promote comprehensive development. The Strategy should assist countries like Mali, which remains in serious crisis thanks to the policies of regime change in Libya, and identify the root causes of instability and conflict there. In that context, we reiterate our firm rejection of interventionist, interfering policies that destabilize and undermine international peace and security.

We also encourage the States members of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to continue working for the definitive deployment and operationalization of their forces. The cooperation of the United Nations, through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and the African Union will be key, and we therefore encourage the conclusion of the technical agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel in the framework of resolution 2391 (2017).

Despite those significant efforts, we are concerned about the continuing complex situation in some countries of the region, whose peoples are facing enormous challenges, mainly in the area of security, which bring with them problems such as cross-border crime, human trafficking, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in drugs and arms — just some of the consequences of conflict that have a negative impact on the civilian population and development in the region — and to which we must add the scourge of terrorism. Bolivia emphatically condemns all forms of violent and criminal activity that harm civilian populations, particularly terrorism, a completely unjustifiable type of aggression and one of the most serious threats to international peace and security in all of its forms and manifestations. We demand the full implementation of resolution 2349 (2017) in the fight against terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram and Da'esh.

The presence of Boko Haram persists in the subregion, with severe consequences. According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1104), between June and September 2017, there were 156

attacks attributed to that terrorist group, of which 100 were perpetrated in Nigeria and five in the Niger, claiming almost 300 fatalities, most of them women, not to mention the shocking kidnapping of girls and children for evil purposes. In that regard, we commend the coordinated efforts of UNOWAS, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Multinational Joint Task Force to develop a strategy for combating Boko Haram. The members of the Security Council and of the United Nations as a whole should give every support possible in order to help them eliminate terrorism and work to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice so that they can be duly investigated, prosecuted and punished.

We should not fail to mention the worrying humanitarian situation facing the population of the subregion, in which 5 million people have been displaced — 2 million of them in the Lake Chad basin region — in addition to the enormous figure of 30 million who are at risk of food insecurity, 4 million of whom are children suffering from malnutrition. We encourage the international community in general to continue to contribute technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation and to make its best efforts to help the most vulnerable populations.

Lastly, Bolivia reaffirms its full support for the regional and subregional architecture for resolving conflict in Africa. We consider it essential to ensure that an African vision is reflected in the implementation of every initiative aimed at bringing genuine peace to the continent. We encourage the Governments of West Africa and the Sahel to continue the process of stabilizing the region while strictly respecting States' sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): Like others before me, I would like to warmly thank Special Representative Chambas for making a difference in West Africa. His good offices, whether in the Gambia, Liberia or Togo, have helped to ease tensions and stabilize countries and the region. Today he noted several positive developments, but considerable challenges remain. Sustained international support in promoting stability is needed, and we see the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) as an essential enabler of such support. Today I would like to to focus on three important aspects of the added value that UNOWAS brings to security and stability in the region — the three Cs of conflict prevention, cross-border cooperation and coordination.

The first C is that of conflict prevention. The Security Council has set it as a priority for UNOWAS, and rightly. A year after a turbulent change of power, the Gambia is on the right track. In Togo, the Special Representative has collaborated with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States to encourage national stakeholders to engage in a much-needed dialogue on constitutional reform. In Liberia, UNOWAS played an important role in ensuring that the elections were peaceful. Sierra Leone will be the next test case for West Africa's encouraging track record on democracy.

The multi-pronged approach of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitutes the ultimate prevention tool. In the Lake Chad region, for example, the effects of water scarcity and climate change are some of the root causes of conflict. Achieving the SDGs, and particularly SDG 6, would secure access to safe water and sanitation. Providing creative solutions to assist the farmers on the Niger border with the water they need to farm and provide for their livelihood will go a long way in addressing the fragility of the region. But as long as we are not there yet, early warning, rapid reaction, the use of good offices and peacebuilding — such as what is offered by UNOWAS — will remain of critical importance in these and other country situations. We therefore encourage the Special Representative to continue his important early warning activities and would support, for instance, the organization of joint early warning missions with the Economic Community of West African States.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize the importance of the C of cross-border security cooperation, whether it is about countering terrorism, organized crime or trafficking and illegal migration flows. Also there, the Lake Chad region is a case in point. The countries of the region have established the Multinational Joint Task Force to tackle the challenges of Boko Haram. However, the threat continues to loom large and the resource challenge is difficult to overcome. I commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's efforts to support diplomatic, security and humanitarian responses to the violence perpetrated against civilians by Boko Haram. The affected countries must be in the driving seat, however.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the reaffirmation by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of the need for a comprehensive approach and calls for a regionally coordinated strategy

for the promotion of peace, security and development. Initiatives by the region that promote such a holistic approach deserve the Council's support. We would welcome special attention and separate reporting, including early warning analyses, on the situation of the Lake Chad basin in the next report of the Secretary-General.

That brings me to the third C of coordination. In West Africa and the Sahel, we will not achieve much if we do not effectively coordinate, both with our partners and within the United Nations system. UNOWAS embodies this very idea. I would note, for example, its role in advancing the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. It reduces duplications, it links the field with Headquarters and it brings stakeholders together. That is exactly what needs to be done as actors and initiatives multiply.

Another example is the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). It can be a success only if the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali provides indispensable operational and logistical support; if key financial contributions are provided through a well-coordinated international mechanism; if the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights can properly support the human rights compliance framework of the Force; and if the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime enables strengthened cooperation between the Force, police and the criminal justice sector. Those are just a few of the necessary conditions.

In conclusion, conflict prevention, regional cooperation and enhanced coordination are critical conditions to addressing the root causes of instability and bringing about peaceful and inclusive development. Through its scope and its mission, UNOWAS is a key enabler in West Africa and one that can early on direct the Council's attention to emerging challenges for the region's stability. Let us make the best possible use of it and make sure it has the financial means to do so.

Let me reiterate our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas, personally, and UNOWAS, generally, for their sustained efforts and leadership.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a source of great satisfaction to the delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to have Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), with us today.

In congratulating and thanking Mr. Chambas for the comprehensive and detailed semi-annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1104), which he has just introduced to us, I should like in particular to express our appreciation for and recognition of the excellent work being carried out by the Special Representative in the region of West Africa and the Sahel, in spite of the numerous challenges and threats that continue to be posed in that region by terrorists groups and violent extremists, as well as by transnational organized crime, especially human and drug trafficking, and the persistence of asymmetrical attacks perpetrated by armed groups in the northern and central parts of Mali. The report of the Secretary-General also points to the humanitarian crisis caused by the resurgence of Boko Haram attacks as of last June, causing more than 2.5 million people to be displaced in the Lake Chad basin area, as well as the severe food crisis suffered by some 500,000 people in that region.

Given these situations, as the briefing we have just heard has illustrated, it is very urgent that the international community decisively support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, established by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali Mauritania and the Niger. This support must also be extended to the Multinational Joint Task Force, made up of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. They should be provided with the means necessary to effectively combat these terrorist groups.

The negative and destabilizing impact of the phenomenon of climate change in several parts of the region, especially for animal husbandry and agricultural production, is also worth mentioning. It is raising serious tensions in some countries of the region as a consequence of the desertification that leads to the emigration and migration of ranchers, which is a source of tension and insecurity within these countries.

Despite the alarming picture we have just painted, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea greatly values the quality work that UNOWAS has been doing in the midst of these challenges. Its stellar work has led to successive renewals of its mandate, trust in its capacity for analysis, early warning, and the mobilization of State and non-State agents in the region in an effort to consolidate democratic processes and ward off threats to national peace and stability. In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes and

encourages the spirit of the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, which is the cornerstone of the UNOWAS mandate.

We express our satisfaction with the positive developments taking place in the region, despite the ongoing threats and challenges, such as economic growth throughout the region; progress in the reform processes under way, especially in the security sectors in The Gambia and Burkina Faso; and the fortunate development and unfolding of presidential elections that we have just seen in Liberia. In line with these positive developments, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea calls on the international community in general and on UNOWAS in particular to take an interest in and support Guinea Bissau so that the current prevailing political situation in that beautiful country, which has considerable resources, can be successfully overcome and a definitive resolution can be reached through inclusive dialogue with the country's political actors.

I conclude by once again pointing out the terrorist threats being faced not only by countries of West Africa and the Sahel, but also in Central Africa, other regions of Africa and the rest of the world. Such is the case of mercenary terrorist groups made up of people and uncontrolled elements from several countries of the subregion who infiltrated the Republic of Equatorial Guinea during the last week of December with the aim of carrying out terrorist attacks and destabilizing the sitting Government. This situation demands vigilance and control of groups that sow insecurity and instability in several countries, on the part of the international community and the United Nations.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We are very pleased to see Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas and we want to thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the situation on the situation in West Africa, the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin, as well as the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) over the past six months. We very much appreciate the great contribution that Mr. Chambas has been making in discharging his very heavy responsibility with regard to these key regions of Africa. Sweden, the Netherlands and others have recognized the contribution of Mr. Chambas, and we share their view.

We take note of the overall developments and trends in these regions, as well as the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We support the continued role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his good offices in efforts aimed at sustaining peace in the region, in collaboration with regional and international partners, through the promotion of inclusive national political dialogue, constitutional and democratic reforms, and transparent and peaceful electoral processes. In such efforts, we must always keep in mind that the collaboration among the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is critical, as was amply demonstrated when it ensured a peaceful and safe transition in Gambia, in which Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas played a key role.

As I have concluded my introductory remarks, I would now like to make a few observations focusing on some of the most important political, security and humanitarian issues highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/1104). With regard to political and governance trends, we welcome the holding of peaceful presidential and legislative elections in Liberia, marking an important milestone in the country's effort to build sustainable democracy. As we celebrate that event and achievement, however, we cannot — as was stressed by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire a while ago — be oblivious of the great need the country has for the effective cooperation and support of the international community to ensure the sustainability of its democratic institutions. Not only are these institutions not built in a day, but they also need to be underpinned by progress in the economic and social sectors in order to address the needs of society.

In contrast to this, the political tension in Togo in relation to the amendment of the country's Constitution is a cause for concern. We support the efforts of regional leaders in trying to assist national stakeholders in arriving at a peaceful resolution to the political crisis. Here it is critical that care is taken so that the relative peace the country has had is not taken for granted. That is why all sectors of society have the responsibility to contribute to ensure that change is achieved peacefully and without allowing a slide to the unknown.

Turning to the security dynamics of the wider region, it is clear that it continues to face multiple and complex security challenges, including the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, drug trafficking and other transnational organized crime. All of these have been elucidated by Mr. Chambas. The visit by the African Union Peace and Security Council to the Lake

Chad basin in July and the holding of the first regional stabilization conference for the Lake Chad basin region in November last year were indeed important developments. However, we express our concern over the withdrawal of Chadian troops from the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Niger and its impact on the Force's response effort, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. The circumstances surrounding those events will have to be looked at seriously with a view to addressing factors that might have given rise to them. The contribution of Chad cannot be taken lightly. There is no doubt that its absence will have implications.

On the other hand, the Security Council's visit to the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) region in October; the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) and resolution 2391 (2017) on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force; and the high-level meeting held in Paris to mobilize support for the Force are encouraging developments. We could not agree more with the Secretary-General on the need to complement the security and military response — whether in the Sahel or the Lake Chad basin regions — with development interventions and on the need to address the root causes of conflict to prevent tensions and violence, to tackle poverty and exclusion, to strengthen the resilience of institutions and communities and to build peaceful and inclusive societies. There is no doubt that widespread food insecurity, forced displacement, climate change, chronic vulnerability and susceptibility to epidemics continue to affect people across the wider region, as we witnessed first hand during our visit to both the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin region last year.

In this context, we believe that accelerating the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is key to addressing that challenge. Although the humanitarian response was further scaled up in 2017, the humanitarian challenge remains enormous; hence the need for enhanced and sustained engagement and support on the part of the international community. The continued cooperation and partnership of the Governments of the region, the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, the G-5 Sahel, the Mano River Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as others, remain indispensable in tackling the multiple and complex challenges faced by countries of the region and promoting peace and stability. We commend the role of UNOWAS and its continued efforts, in cooperation and partnership with all of those important stakeholders, in fulfilling its mandate.

Finally, we look forward to constructively engaging in the discussion on the draft presidential statement to be proposed by Côte d'Ivoire, which has assumrf the penholdership of this dossier from Senegal.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas for his insightful briefing on the semi-annual report of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the recent developments in West Africa and the Sahel. I would like to sum up by saying that we appreciate the important role that Mr. Chambas and UNOWAS are playing in conflict prevention throughout the vast region, and that cooperation with regional and subregional actors is extremely vital if we are to have an effective impact. Such collaborative efforts have yielded the latest positive political and economic developments that we have witnessed in West Africa.

In that vein, we call on UNOWAS to continue its work on strengthening post-electoral stability and paying close attention to the upcoming elections across the region. The work of UNOWAS will now become even more challenging with the closure of both the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, especially in the light of the increasing threat of terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel, with linkages to transnational organized crime. We are deeply concerned by the food insecurity and forced displacement among civilians caused by violence related to terrorist activities.

Kazakhstan fully supports regional initiatives to address these threats through the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force, and commends international partners for mobilizing financial support for these initiatives, as well as for the provision of humanitarian aid for the affected population. We believe that the military approach and humanitarian assistance should also be implemented with development efforts in an integrated, complex and well-coordinated manner, reinforced with long-term sustainable funding. We, therefore, stress the importance of recalibrating the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and developing an integrated approach for the Lake Chad basin region.

To that end, we recommend a coordinated modus operandi on the part of all United Nations agencies and programmes concerned in order to increase the effectiveness of assistance provided by the United Nations on the ground, ensuring greater transparency in its adminstration, including anti-corruption measures and a more effective use of shrinking development and humanitarian aid towards a harmonized United Nations approach in Africa and its subregions.

Kazakhstan will continue to work together with the other Council members and key actors to find a solution in order to achieve lasting peace in West Africa and the Sahel region.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.